



# Snakes at Risk...

Although many people fear snakes, they are an important part of an ecosystem. As predators, they consume significant numbers of rodents and insects. They in turn are important food for other animals we value such as hawks, owls, badgers, and bears.

Grasslands in the Kamloops area are home to three species of snakes considered at risk.

These snakes live in warm, dry habitats of grasslands, and open forests. They prefer dry, rocky habitats, but are sometimes found in meadows and pond edges. In winter, they retreat into traditional dens (hibernacula) where they are protected from freezing conditions.



Karl Larsen

**Western Rattlesnakes** are the only venomous snake in British Columbia. The broad triangular head, stout grey body with dark diamond-shaped blotches, and a rattle at the end of the tail distinguish them. When frightened or disturbed, rattlesnakes will produce a buzzing sound by vibrating its tail and rattle.

A number of Provincial Grassland Parks support resident populations of these vulnerable reptiles, and play an important role in their conservation.

Snakes are an integral part of our grassland's fragile ecosystem. Do your part in conserving these species.

- Avoid driving over snakes that are crossing or basking on roads
- Do not disturb rock or debris piles. Snakes often use these areas to seek shelter.
- Keep dogs under control at all times.

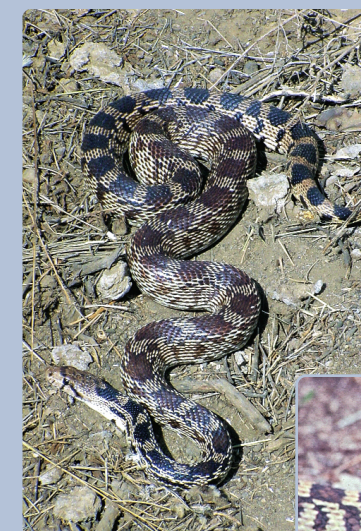


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Racers are slender, streamlined snakes with a large, long, flattened head. The head and body are slate-grey or olive green in colour. The belly ranges in colour from vivid yellow to whitish yellow. Young racers (inset) have a blotched pattern on back that slowly disappears as they mature. Racers are very shy and move swiftly, and seldom linger long enough to be identified.

- Observe them from a distance. In British Columbia, it is illegal to capture, harass, or kill snakes.
- Report sightings of Rattle Snakes, Gopher Snakes, Racers and den locations to BC Parks.

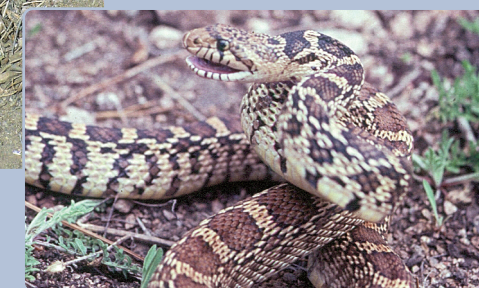
Discourage others from damaging grasslands and report illegal activities. Irresponsible use of grasslands can result in damage to critical wildlife habitats.



Bob Scheer



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Gopher snakes are harmless but are often mistaken for rattlesnakes. Although they have similar body patterns, they have a narrower head and lack the rattle at the end of the tail. When alarmed, they may vibrate their tail and produce a loud hissing sound.

## Help protect Grassland habitat.

Grasslands are BC's most endangered ecosystem. By protecting grasslands, snakes and other species will continue to thrive in these areas.

To learn more about the snakes, grasslands, and to report sightings, please contact:



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